



Three Individual Groups in a Show of Little Pictures Now Being Held at the Public Library in Toronto. Left to Right—L. S. Harris, Curtis Williamson, Archibald Browne.

Art in Little Pictures

By AUGUSTUS BRIDLE

WHAT makes art in little pictures has never been definitely determined. But a step in that direction has been made by the exhibition of 270 little pictures by 47 Canadian artists from as far east as Montreal—now being held at the Public Library in Toronto, which is the only art gallery in that city and by no means a good one. There is no city in Canada with so many artists and so few facilities for exhibiting good pictures. The present show is designed to be an innovation on the regular society, club or academy exhibit; and it is.

In the first place there is no canvas in the lot bigger than a large napkin; and some of them are the size of postcards. The idea originated with a small committee of artists and George Locke, chief librarian. It is intended to popularize small, good pictures by Canadian artists, among people who are sometimes scared by the prodigious displays of big pictures at the society shows. How far it has succeeded may be judged by the fact that in four days after the show was opened there had been sold of little pictures up to the amount of \$1,500.

But of course sales don't always mean merit. Though it must be admitted that the buyers' tastes in this selection have been much nearer the mark than usual. One reason of this probably is that a man finds it easier to decide on a thing that he has good reason for liking, when it doesn't cost him more than fifty or a hundred dollars, and may be only twenty-five. A lot of people would begin to take a large interest in art if they knew that to do so doesn't mean to be either a connoisseur or a millionaire.

As these little pictures were painted more or less casually the appreciation of them may also be casual. One pleasant innovation is that the show begins with number 1 at the first door and ends at 272 back at the door again; so that by simply following the numbers in their order you see the show, your catalogue follows the pictures, and the works of each artist are, in nearly every case, hung in a group. This prevents the muddle in finding the price of a picture in the catalogue and the bewilderment of a general melange among the pictures; an improvement which, of course, is only possible with small pictures.

Number 1 and up to 7 concerns Herbert S. Palmer, who has a pleasant pastoral note. His Beet Field is a most refreshingly peaceful thing. His Back Road is a quiet study. There is seldom any jarring note. Palmer aims to please; and he does it. Some day he will not fear to jar somebody by not keeping out of trouble.

L. S. Harris is next; and a contrast. He has ten; seven of them labelled as sketches. The first is Shacks; which may be taken as the keynote of Harris, a young painter who, wherever possible, goes in by the lane and the kitchen door, stays outside as much as possible, hits up the back places and the tumble-down things where light plays with such gorgeous abandon without guile. Shacks is a melancholy study. He meant it to be so. His Afternoon Sun, a loud, red wall of a brick house with a snow-hung bush in the foreground, at first strikes one as being baldheadedly realistic, but afterwards reveals a strong touch in the handling of the light—in which he is becoming a master; as shown also in his Moonlight.

Maurice Cullen has no master in Canada for snow pictures. He has one here of the River St.

Eustache that fetches out all the odd tonalities of snow, water and weeds; another of Cape Diamond, that reeks of blustery cold, but would have been all the better if done at longer range.

I don't know what the many decorative panelesque things of Bertha des Clayes amount to. They number 13.

Jackson, of Montreal, has little quartettes dotted on here a pillar and there a post; the dinkiest little approximations to the cubist and the futurist that could be found in real little pictures of Venice and a few other spots; highly popular and quite daringly unusual.

Curtis Williamson's lot require more light. They are low in tone and somewhat subtle in character; most of them European; and by no means a really representative collection from this strong painter of life in many moods.

Glide along to the cheerful group from Archibald Browne, famous for etherealized moons. Four out

and his Berkshire Hamlet only less so; and his Woodland Path as good as either. For the rest the painter of Doon is not compelling enough to keep you from passing on to the odd decoratively brilliant things of Dorothy Stevens, a young Canadian who learned her art abroad and has somewhat of a Parisian brilliance of dexterity, with a huge cleverness in the handling of accessory details.

Brigden's Hilltop and Cloud makes you wish he had more like it. Four of Bell-Smith's are exceedingly good—Tiltingham's House, Point a Pic, Piccadilly Circus and Putney. He always gets a fine touch of half-quaint fancy in his English bits, much as he may prefer the Canadian Rockies.

Jefferys has a number of stunning yellows from the prairie; stacks and wheat-fields and wolf-willows—but commend me above all to the fine virility of handling yellows and greens in his Coulee Trail.

John Russell is the brilliantest galaxy in the show; visible for a mile and all in the high C, rampant with colour and superbly negligent of ordinary human meaning. Somewhat Parisian, though he is by birth a Canadian.

One only of Tom Greene's is hung; but it is so good that one feels sure that he has many more such intimate big touches of the real Canadian out-of-doors done by a somewhat pagan philosopher.

William H. Clapp's are always efflorescent of bright dancing, evasive colours, almost sidaneresque and in the mass very decorative, but as serious studies—?

Mary Wrinch has been quieting down from her once half-savage delineations. She is beginning to interpret. Two of her eleven are strikingly good; Sunlit Slopes and Clouds and Water.

William Brymner has two—Nemours and Sugar Camp—that carry his collection of 13 of a high average of merit. The Sugar Camp is a gem. J. E. H. Macdonald—another prolific maker of good pictures—seems to be running neck and neck with Harris in the virile handling of unhackneyed human things; though the man who seems to have spent \$200 for the fine, big island-and-lake picture might have made a better investment had he bought four or five of the others, such as Winter Sketch and Harvesting. Macdonald has 22. All are worth while; but less would have been quite as convincing.

Beatty tops the list, with 24, some of which are as fine as ever I expect to see in sketches, and a few of them are big as pictures. Unorthodox though it may be, I prefer his sketch of the half-breeds and Indians coming out of the church up at Fort Mettagami to any of the others. It's only a sketch; but it's worth seven of the others—though not any seven. Some of his old-world ones are especially good.

Atkinson has one of the most peculiar groups in the show; a low-toned, fuzzed-up grey-green-brown or what-not collection that show much originality of handling, but do not charm at first glance. Besides there are odd groups; that of G. A. Reid, Winter Morning, one of the best; Manly's Dartmoor Weather; Grier's Street Scene at St. Ives; Mary Reid's After Rain; Elizabeth Knowles' Evening and chicken studies; Gagnon's Autumn Evening; Gagen's Light Fog and Graham's Dinner Hour—though his Milking-Time is good; and Holmes' Evening Primrose—a little beauty.

All of which are somewhat sketchy, as is this rambling appreciation of a really interesting and instructive exhibit.



Individual Collection of Miss Mary Wrinch.

of his twelve are compellingly admirable; The Pines, Kleinburg, Sunlit Valley and Street in the Ward—though he never gets the squalour but always the fanciful colour of the back places, and always the neat, well-combed elegance of the fine landscape with a haze somewhere and an indefinable note over most of it—though the Pines are bold enough.

Suzor-Cote's Winter Sunset is worth all the other six together. Here is a wild and uncouth splendour of the waste and jagged woods. But shift along to the adjacent comfortable and thick-coated pets of Homer Watson, always capable of texture and revelling in the lower tones—though here he is in higher key than usual. His Wood Road is fine;